

Sermon 80: Embrace a Cooperative Ministry Spirit: 1 Corinthians 16:12-24

Text: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24 "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity. I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth. I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such. The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss. The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen..."

Introduction: There are eight basic encouragements in the final section of the epistle.

- **Last time:**
 - **Encouragement 1: Be strong: 16:13** "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong..."
 - **Encouragement 2: Be loving: 16:14** "Let all your things be done with charity..."
- **Today we will examine three specific encouragements related to a cooperative ministry spirit.**

Encouragement 1: Embrace order: 16:15-16 "I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) That ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth..."

- **The church needs order, and scripture articulates that order:**
 - **Titus 1:5** "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee..."
 - **Acts 14:23** "When they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed..."
- **There are two offices in the local church:**
 - **Pastor/elder/overseers:** spiritual oversight and pastoral care
 - **Deacon:** caring for the physical needs of the church

- **The household of Stephanas was special to Paul:** "Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia"
 - **They were referred to as the first-fruits:**
 - Achaia was a Roman province in modern day southern and central Greece.
 - Paul's experience leading up to his ministry in Corinth was challenging.
 - This region was known as an exceptionally pagan region.
 - **They were the only household Paul baptized: 1 Corinthians 1:16** "I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other..."
 - **This relationship would have made his family very special to Paul.**
- **They were deeply devoted to the work of ministry:** "They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints"
 - **"Addicted" or "devoted:"** The Greek term has the idea of a formal appointment carrying a deep weight of responsibility and a structure of order.
 - **Matthew 28:16** "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had **appointed** them..."
 - **Luke 7:8** "I also am a man **set under** authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it..."
 - **Acts 22:10** "What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are **appointed** for thee to do..."
- **Stephanas probably served as a pastor/elder/overseer:** "Submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and laboureth..."
 - **"Submit:"** Put yourself under their authority, like someone in the military puts themselves under the authority of the one over them.
 - **Romans 13:1** "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God..."
 - **1 Peter 5:5** "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble..."
 - **Other passages:**
 - **Hebrews 13:17** "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as

they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you..."

- **1 Timothy 5:17** "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine..."

- **Application:**

- The work of ministry demands a level of organization.
- Those who are in leadership roles need to meet a specific level of commitment because they carry a great load of responsibility.
- They cannot do it alone and need people to come alongside them and do the work with them, under their oversight.
- Understand your role in the church and embrace that role willingly.

Encouragement 2: Embrace encouragement: 16:17-18 "I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such..."

- **Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus were more than likely a delegation sent from Corinth to Paul at Ephesus.**
 - Stephanas was probably a prominent citizen in Corinth based upon the wording of this passage was probably functioning as a pastor/elder at Corinth.
 - These other two men were either members of his household or appointed church leaders like additional pastor/elders.
- **Only these men could greet Paul in person, put they represented the church to him:** "That which was lacking on your part they have supplied..."
- **Their presence was a blessing to Paul and to the church:** "They have refreshed my spirit and yours..."
 - There were many negatives in the Corinthian church.
 - It was not all negative.
 - Paul loved these men and they loved him.
 - They served a troubled church in a way that was good for them.
- **The church needed to recognize their faithful service that brought them so much good:** "Acknowledge ye them that are such..."
- **Application:**
 - There are many negatives in life and even in the church context.
 - Don't be naïve or compromised but also look for ways to refresh and lift up others.
 - Be an encourager.

Encouragement 3: Embrace opportunity: 16:19-20 "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you..."

- **These churches found their heritage in the Corinthian church:** "The churches of Asia salute you..."
- **This couple was an instrumental part of that heritage:** "Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house..."
- **Their story is a wonderful testimony to God's providence in ordinary life: Acts 18:1-3** "After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers..."
- **Ordinary interactions compounded over 15 years:**
 - **Paul left them in Ephesus: Acts 18:18-19** "Then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila...And he came to Ephesus, and left them there..."
 - **They disciplined Apollos: Acts 18:24-28** "And a certain Jew named Apollos...an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John...when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly...when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews...shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ..."
 - **They ministered in Rome: Romans 16:3-5** "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house..."
 - **They ministered in Ephesus: 1 Corinthians 16:19** "The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house..."
 - **They ministered again in Ephesus: 2 Timothy 4:19** "Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus..."
- **15 years of fruitfulness in Rome, Ephesus, Corinth, and Ephesus again:**
 - They personally encouraged Paul through their faithfulness.
 - They opened their home for young church plants.

- They personally disciplined an influential minister in the early church.
- They were known to Christians throughout Macedonia, Achaia, Asia, and Rome.
- **It all started with ordinary work during a painful season of life.**

Application:

- God established the church to be salt and light in the world.
- We must embrace the role He has for us in this ministry.
- We must embrace His order and the role we were called to play in that order.
- We should strive to be encouragers.
- We must embrace and strive to fulfil the opportunities He gives us in His work.